

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LA PAZ 03372 01 OF 02 281503Z
ACTION ARA-14

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USCINCSO J2 QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LA PAZ 3372

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, BL
SUBJECT: ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN: PEREDA STILL OUT FRONT

REF: LA PAZ 3228

1. SUMMARY. WITH LESS THAN TWO AND ONE HALF MONTHS REMAINING BEFORE ELECTIONS, THREE CANDIDATES--JUAN PEREDA, RENE BERNAL AND HERNAN SILES ZUAZO--HAVE BEEN FORMALLY PROCLAIMED FOR THE PRESIDENCY, WHILE TWO OTHERS--JOSE PATINO AYOROA AND MARIO GUTIERREZ--CONTINUE TO VACILLATE IN THE WINGS. IN RECENT DAYS THE CANDIDACY OF FRONT RUNNER JUAN PEREDA HAS GAINED MOMENTUM WITH RENEWED EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT FROM PRESIDENT BANZER AND A SOMEWHAT IMPROVED FINANCIAL SITUATION. THE BERNAL CANDIDACY, WHILE LESS SOLVENT AND BACKED ONLY THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (PDC), CONTINUES TO PLOD ALONG, DRAWING RESPECTABLE CROWDS MAINLY IN THE ORURO AREA. POTENTIALLY STRONGER IS THE PRESIDENTIAL BID OF FORMER PRESIDENT SILES ZUAZO. SILES, HOWEVER, RECEIVED A SETBACK WHEN HE WAS PUBLICLY DENOUNCED FOR "DIVIDING THE LEFT" BY THE MARXIST-LENINISTS, FACTIONS OF THE TROTSKYITE POR, AND THE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LA PAZ 03372 01 OF 02 281503Z

COMMUNIST VANGUARD. THESE GROUPS, AUGMENTED BY THE PRIN, THEN FOMED THEIR OWN ELECTORAL FRONT AND TRIED TO PUSH PRIN LEADER JUAN LECHIN OQUENDO FOR THE PRESIDENCY; LECHIN, HOWEVER, SAID HE WAS NOT INTERESTED. UNKNOWN QUANTITIES ARE GUTIERREZ AND PATINO AYOROA. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS THAT GUTIERREZ MAY SHELVE HIS OWN PRESIDENTIAL AMBITIONS TO TAKE THE NUMBER TWO SPOT ON A PATINO TICKET, PATINO HAS THUS FAR NOT BEEN

ABLE TO PULL TOGETHER PARTY SUPPORT, AND REMAINS UNDECLARED.
END SUMMARY

2. PEREDA PROSPERS. WITH LESS THAN 74 DAYS TO GO BEFORE THE JULY 9 ELECTIONS, PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE PEREDA, HAVING WEATHERED A MAJOR CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE, CLEARLY REMAINS THE FRONT RUNNER. BANZER'S TRUE INTENTIONS ARE KNOWN ONLY TO HIMSELF, BUT HE HAS PUBLICLY RECOMMITTED HIMSELF TO THE PEREDA CANDIDACY. AS REPORTED REFTEL, BANZER STUMPED WITH PEREDA IN THE POLITICALLY-HOT COCHABAMBA VALLEY TOWN OF CLIZA. THE TWO SUBSEQUENTLY TRAVELED TO SANTA CRUZ, WHERE THEY PRESENTED AN IMAGE OF COMRADELY SOLIDARITY AT ONE OF THAT CITY'S MOST POPULAR WATERING SPOTS. LEAVING BANZER BEHIND, PEREDA CONTINUED ON A BUSY CAMPAIGN SCHEDULE, APPEARING IN THE LA PAZ LOWER-CLASS SUBURB OF EL ALTO (WHERE HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY MAYOR MARIO MERCADO) AND AT A SERIES OF PEASANT RALLIES IN THE COCHABAMBA VALLEY AND NORTHERN POTOSI.

3. PEREDA HAS RECENTLY BEGUN TO RECEIVE INCREASED FINANCIAL SUPPORT, ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT CLEAR PRECISELY WHERE THE MONEY IS COMING FROM. WHILE PEREDA INTIMATES COMPLAIN THAT FUNDS ARE STILL SCARCE, CLEARLY HIS CANDIDACY IS IN MUCH BETTER FINANCIAL SHAPE THAN A MONTH AGO. PEREDA HAS STEPPED UP HIS PUBLIC APPEARANCES, AND HIS CAMPAIGN ADS ARE AGAIN FLOURISHING REGULARLY IN THE NEWSPAPERS.

4. WHILE PEREDA STILL LACKS DEEP PARTY SUPPORT, HIS CANDIDACY
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LA PAZ 03372 01 OF 02 281503Z

HAS BEEN GIVEN A BOOST BY THE RECENT ADHESION OF FSB MODERATES LED BY GASTON MOREIRA. MOREIRA'S DECISION TO JOIN PEREDA WAS RATIFIED BY A WELL-ATTENDED FSB CONGRESS (THE LEGALITY OF WHICH HAS BEEN DISPUTED BY FALANGE HARDLINERS WHO FOLLOW MARIO GUTIERREZ) ON APRIL 25. WITH MOREIRA'S GROUP NOW SOLIDLY BEHIND HIM, PEREDA HAS BEGUN TO DRAW UP VOTING LISTS. WE ARE TOLD THAT HE HAS TENTATIVELY ALLOTTED 20 DEPUTY OR SENATE SEATS TO THE NMR, 20 TO THE FSB, AND 20 TO HIS PEASANT SUPPORTERS. (IF PEREDA WINS, HIS BACKERS WILL FILL 18 SENATE SEATS, OF A TOTAL 27, AND 80 DEPUTY SEATS, OF A TOTAL 111.) HOWEVER, SINCE THE PEASANT SECTOR HAS 28 CONGRESSIONAL SEATS UNDER PRESIDENT BARRIENTOS. FOUR OF THE NMR AND FIVE OF THE FSB QUOTA WILL BE FILLED BY PEASANTS SELECTED BY THOSE PARTIES. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT BANZER WILL NAME EIGHT OF THE REMAINING 29 CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES, THUS GUARANTEEING HIM A MEASURE OF INFLUENCE IN THE NEW LEGISLATURE.

5. BERNAL--STILL PLODDING ALONG. THE CANDIDACY OF FORMER DEFENSE MINISTER RENE BERNAL HAS RECEIVED LITTLE PUBLICITY LATELY AND HAS NOT MOVED MUCH BEYOND THE ORURO AREA. BERNAL IS HAMPERED BY A LACK OF FUNDS AND A NARROW POLITICAL BASE, RESTRICTED THUS FAR TO THE PDC. HIS CANDIDACY HAS NEITHER CAUGHT FIRE, NOR

PETERED OUT. BERNAL'S PROSPECTS FOR RUNNING STRONG IN JULY NOW
APPEAR TO HINGE ON WHETHER HE WILL BE ABLE TO ATTRACT BROADER
PARTY SUPPORT AND SOME MUCH NEEDED CASH.

6. SILES ZUAZO--OFF TO A SHAKY START. FORMER PRESIDENT HERNAN
SILES ZUAZO REMAINS THE OPPOSITION CANDIDATE WITH GREATEST
ELECTORAL POTENTIAL. HIS COALITION, WHICH CONSISTS OF HIS MNRI,
THE MIR, THE SOCIALISTS OF GUILLERMO APONTE, THE MIN, AND MUS-
COVITE COMMUNISTS, WAS FORMED TO UNITE THE LEFTIST OPPOSITION.
SHORTLY AFTER HIS CANDIDACY WAS PROCLAIMED, HOWEVER, SILES CAME
UNDER SHARP ATTACK FROM THE EXTREME LEFT, INNWUDING THE MARXIST-
LENINISTS, FACTIONS OF THE TORTSKYITE POR, AND THE COMMUNIST
VANGUARD, WHICH CLAIMED THAT HE HAD DISCRIMINATED AGAINST THEM.
THESE GROUPS BANDED TOGETHER INTO THE LEFTIST REVOLUTIONARY
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 LA PAZ 03372 01 OF 02 281503Z

FRONT (FRI) AND PROCLAIMED PRIN CHIEF JUAN LECHIN OQUENDO FOR THE
PRESIDENCY. HOWEVER, LECHIN, WHO HAS DEOMSTRATED NO INTEREST
IN ELECTORAL POLITICS, POLITELY TURNED THEM DOWN. REPUDIATED
BY THE EXTREME LEFT BUT STILL LACKING SUBSTANTIAL MODERATE
LEFT SUPPORT, SILES HAS NOT YET BEGUN TO CAMPAIGN ACTIVELY. AN
MNRI SPOKESMAN HAS TOLD US THAT THE SILES FRONT STILL EXPECTS TO
GAIN THE SUPPORT OF THE PAZESTENSSORISTA MNR AND THE PRIN. WE
UNDERSTAND THAT THE PAZESTENSSORISTAS ARE CURRENTLY DIVIDED

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PAGE 01 LA PAZ 03372 02 OF 02 281525Z

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AMEMBASSY QUITO

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USCINCSO J2 QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 LA PAZ 3372

ON HOW TO RESPOND TO THE SILES OVERTURE, AND THAT THE CHANCES OF A SILES-LECHIN RAPPROCHEMENT ARE SLIGHT. THE SPOKESMAN ALSO COMPLAINED OF A LACK OF FUNDS, WHICH HE SAID MEANS THAT THE SILES CANDIDACY WILL HAVE TO SAVE ITS THUNDER TO THE LAST PHASE OF THE CAMPAIGN PERIOD.

7. PATINO-GUTIERREZ--POSSIBLE DUO? HAVING OPTED AGAINST JOINING THE PEREDA CAMP, FSB CHIEF MARIO GUTIERREZ AND HIS MILITANT RIGHT-WING FOLLOWERS HAVE NOT YET BEGUN TO PURSUE A CLEAR-CUT COURSE OF ACTION. GUTIERREZ HAS PUBLICLY EXPRESSED SYMPATHY FOR THE BERNAL CANDIDACY; THERE ARE ALSO REPORTS THAT HE MAY BE DISPOSED TO THROW HIS SUPPORT TOWARD "TOPATER" SIGNATORY RETIRED COLONEL JOSE PATINO AYOROA, WHO HAS HINTED HE MIGHT SOON BECOME A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, BUT THUS FAR LACKS PARTY BACKING. IN A CONVERSATION WITH THE AMBASSADOR ON APRIL NKAPKGUTIERREZ TIED THESE TWO POSSIBILITIES TOGETHER, COMMENTING THAT HE MIGHT TRY TO FORM A BERNAL-PATINO-GUTIERREZ COALITION-A POLITICAL GROUPING WE THINK WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE. IN AN APRIL 25 INTERVIEW, GUTIERREZ COHORT CARLOS VALVERDE BARBERY TOLD THE PRESS THAT

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PAGE 02 LA PAZ 03372 02 OF 02 281525Z

THERE WERE THREE OPTIONS: (1) GO IT ALONE WITH THE GUTIERREZ-PONCE CABALLERO TICKET (WHICH, THOUGH NOT FORMALLY PROCLAIMED, CONTINUES TO BE FLOATED PUBLICLY); (2) BACK A PATINO AYOROA PRESIDENTIAL BID (PRESUMABLY WITH GUTIERREZ AS HIS RUNNING MATE); OR (3) JOIN ANOTHER COALITION. ALTHOUGH IN HIS MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADOR GUTIERREZ APPEARED RESIGNED TO ELECTIONS TAKING PLACE, SOME ASTUTE LOCAL OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT HE AND HIS FOLLOWERS (PERHAPS WITH BANZER'S COLLUSION) ARE STILL BENT ON DERAILING THE PROCESS. IT APPEARS CLEAR THAT GUTIERREZ WILL NOT JOIN THE PEREDA CANDIDACY (WHERE IDEOLOGICALLY HE BELONGS) AND CANNOT HOPE TO RIDE INTO POWER WITH THE OPPOSITION.

8. CONCLUSIONS. WHILE STILL NOT A FORMIDABLE CANDIDATE, PEREDA IS PERHAPS STRONGER THAN EVEN BEFORE. BANZER MAY NOT BE AS SOLIDLY BEHIND HIM AS HE PROFESSES, BUT HE IS PUTTING UP A GOOD PUBLIC FRONT; WHICH GIVEN HIS CANDIDACY A CERTAIN GLITTER THAT WAS LACKING IN PREVIOUS WEEKS. BERNAL'S CANDIDACY, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAS PROBABLY REACHED ITS LIMITS, AND MAY BEGIN TO FADE AS SILES ZUAZO TAKES HOLD. IF SILES PICKS UP MORE CENTRIST SUPPORT--AND SOME APPARENTLY SORELY NEEDED CASH--HE COULD BEGIN TO PRESS PEREDA, PARTICULARLY IN THE CITIES AND IN THE LABOR AND MINING SECTORS, BUT HIS CHANCES OF BEATING HIM REMAIN SLIGHT. AT THE MOMENT, AT LEAST, ALL THE OTHERS--PATINO, GUTIERREZ AND THE EXTREME LEFT--ARE

OUT IN THE COLD, WITH LITTLE CHANCE OF WINNING EVEN A HANDFUL
OF CONGRESSIONAL SEATS IN JULY.
BOEKER

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